



Tennessee First to the Top Monthly Update

February 2011

- Standards and Assessment –As part of the effort to design a more effective mechanism for delivery of Common Core Standards training, the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) convened its first meeting of an advisory group on establishing an Instructional Learning Network. The advisory group will be facilitated by Dr. Bill Daggett and includes a variety of educators and other stakeholders. TDOE is looking to examples in Kentucky, other states, and internationally. Recommendations are expected in early summer.

Tennessee is a governing state in the PARCC consortium. Staff in the assessment division at TDOE have been engaged in the establishment of a Technical Advisory Committee and Technical Working groups covering innovations in technology, item design, psychometrics, test design, automated scoring and Artificial Intelligence (AI) scoring. Content tools for training in the Common Core Standards have moved to the top of the priority list based on feedback from governing states including Tennessee.

- Data Systems – The RFP for technology to support the Teacher and Leader Evaluation system is awaiting final approval and will be released in March. Working with SCORE, TDOE is convening a focus group of educators to review plans for the Early Warning Data System on March 4.
- Great Teachers and Leaders – Recommendations about alternative measures of student growth from the twelve working groups of educators in non-tested subjects are in the final stages. The recommendations will be initially reviewed by TDOE staff and a Technical Advisory Group in March. The RFP for the Leadership Action Tank is finalized and will be submitted for review in early March. Battelle for Kids held training sessions with TDOE staff on their work to date with educators in the field. Reports from educators on the Battelle for Kids formative assessment and value added training continue to be very positive. Battelle for Kids and TDOE have finalized plans for consulting days on strategic compensation to be available to the Innovation Acceleration Fund and TIF districts.
- School Turnaround – The Commissioner has presented plans for schools to be part of the Achievement School District (ASD) for the 2011-2012 school year to the Governor and his staff. The Commissioner and Deputy Superintendent of the ASD will meet in the first two weeks of March with superintendents who have ASD eligible schools to review the plan for the coming year. Soon after, the ASD will begin to hire principals and immediately following will begin work

on school staffing. Interviews for the ASD Superintendent position are underway and will continue in early March.

- STEM – The contract naming Battelle Memorial Institute as the Managing Director of the Network was fully executed. TDOE finalized negotiations with Metro Nashville Public Schools to provide support and funding for Stratford Academy of Science and Engineering and held further meetings with Knox County to begin negotiations around funding for the Knox County STEM Academy. The Tennessee Higher Education Committee released a request for proposals for the first of two professional development projects for current STEM K-12 educators to strengthen STEM math and science content knowledge through innovative pedagogy. TDOE also worked with other STEM professional development managers, including the staff for SITES-M, to strengthen their student performance measures and align their goals with those of the state. The TN STEM Innovation Network was represented by Sky Gallegos from TDOE at several conferences and meetings: the Winter Meeting of the TN STEM Leadership Council; the Middle TN State University Math and Science Education Research Conference; and the TN Council for Career and Technical Education Winter Conference.
- Higher Education and Teacher Preparation – The Tennessee Higher Education Commission hosted a committee comprised of teacher preparation faculty, alternative teacher preparation programs, and state policymakers to revise the *Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs* earlier this month. This report card will evaluate teacher preparation programs based on their graduates' contribution to student achievement growth. THEC is working in conjunction with the SAS Institute to develop training sessions for teacher education faculty to learn more about the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System and its utility in the classroom. Numerous sessions will be held across the state in mid-March.
- Research and Evaluation – Tennessee staff met with TNCRED to review their annual work plan and to discuss the progress of the survey of the new teacher evaluation field test. TNCRED expects to have results from the survey by the end of March.
- Scopes of Work – TDOE staff met to plan for the next Scope of Work revision period at the end of the 2010-2011 school year. LEAs will be able to make amendments during the month of May and Department staff will review and approve in June. LEAs will be able to begin expending year 2 funds on July 1st. Department staff also reviewed award letters, revisions to the awards to reflect some changes to scopes of Work, and the schedule for fiscal monitoring.
- Education Delivery Unit – The Delivery Unit held the second High School Graduation Rate checkpoint meeting with the Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner goal leader to assess progress toward meeting this goal. It gathered research and scale estimates to work with goal teams in revising trajectories toward targets in early grades reading and high school graduation rate. It worked with the early grades reading team to build stakeholder engagement, benchmarking, and risk mitigation plans. It worked with a TDOE team to prepare for a Feb. 14th working group meeting for a new instructional professional development delivery system and

presented this system to the First to the Top Advisory Council on Feb. 10th. In addition, the EDU held field visits for High School Graduation Rate in Metro Nashville and Knox County schools. Finally, it reviewed progress on the Teacher and Leader Evaluation project with recommendations for the project manager and Commissioner.

- Communications – The Communications Department conducted three webinar briefings, two for school leaders and one for educators and education stakeholders, regarding the new teacher and principal evaluation. Educators and education stakeholders were encouraged to use the materials provided to conduct information sessions with their own educator peers or community groups. The Communications Department, in conjunction the policy office and department staff, is working with several educator focused stakeholder groups on engaging teachers in the evaluation policy making process through networking events in the spring. The Communications Department officially announced the opening of the TELL Tennessee learning conditions survey window for all educators and continues to use social media outlets to encourage licensed educators to participate. The state has seen a 41 percent participation rate after only two weeks. Communications staff is preparing information and very early draft plans for the one-year anniversary of Tennessee Race to the Top win.
- First to the Top Advisory Council – The Advisory Council meet for the fourth time on February 10. Governor Haslam addressed the Council at the beginning of the meeting to express his support for First to the Top initiatives, encourage the Council to continue to ask tough questions, and bring any implementation issues to his attention. The Governor was clear that the work of First to the Top is essential to his education agenda and overall goals for the state. The Council heard updates on the Teacher and Leader evaluation, the Achievement School District, plans for the Instructional Learning Network, and work with teacher preparation programs. Discussion on the topics was rich and provided staff with important insights on communications and policy direction. The next meeting will take place in April and will address more fully the Teacher and Leader evaluation, Common Core Standards alignment, and progress towards student achievement goals.